

Letters to The Times

Taiwan Action Protested

Sentencing of Lei Chen and Attack
on Paper Called Totalitarian

The writer of the following letter, onetime director of the United States Information Service in China, is Professor of History at Harvard University.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Chinese Nationalist military, invoking martial law, gave the publisher Lei Chen a ten-year sentence on Oct. 8 and now will prosecute Taiwan's leading independent paper, Kung Lun Pao. The military indictment of Lei Chen was flimsy beyond belief—a witness who confessed a "Communist connection" ten years ago was not produced for cross-examination; editorials in Lei's anti-Communist Free China Fortnightly (founded by Dr. Hu Shih in 1949) were labeled "seditious" for questioning the feasibility of reconquering the mainland or the wisdom of purely economic-military American aid which gave inadequate political, cultural and moral assistance."

Behind this railroading of Lei Chen and attack on press freedom lies the fact that Lei was heading a small, new, would-be opposition party, which still seeks to compete, lawfully and publicly, with the Kuomintang as a loyal opposition to it.

These high-handed, police-state actions in Taipei have most serious implications. They are an affront to the great majority of modern-minded Nationalist Chinese and an insult to the friendly American people, as widespread American press comment has clearly indicated.

Significance of Support

This is totalitarianism within the gates. It weakens our mutual anti-Communist cause and damages American prestige throughout Asia. It robs our support of Taiwan of its proper ideological significance. It is a setback for Taiwan's hoped-for role as an area within the free world where Chinese leaders may set a model of political progress for their compatriots enslaved on the mainland.

Has our extensive aid no idea of political freedom behind it? Do we guarantee Taiwan, at the risk of war, only to support an atavistic dictatorship which prefers unnecessary, police-state methods to a healthy political process? It seems incredible that Chiang Kai-shek, our ally of two decades, does not yet recognize that American interest in Taiwan is based partly on principle, that any new President in Washington will have to develop policies, and that American support of a free China, which so many of us advocate, is not automatic but must rest on its merits in American opinion.

JOHN KING FAIRBANK.

Cambridge, Mass., Oct. 27, 1960.

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